

## Mass beyond the Altar Rail

REV. THOMAS MOORE, S.J.

**T**HERE is all the difference in the world between having to do something and wanting to do it. The one is pain, the other is pleasure. We are like that. A sense of being compelled to do something may well take all the happiness out of a work which otherwise would be a real pleasure.

I mention this because I have met people who look upon attendance at Sunday Mass in that way. The Church tells us very definitely that we must go to Mass on Sunday under pain of mortal sin. Sunday comes around, the obligation of going to Mass looms, specter-like, out of our waking dreams, and one immediately begins to think of all the inconveniences which an obligation of this kind entails. If the morning is particularly bad, one might work himself into a state in which he sees Mass as a good hour lost out of life, or at least, out of a day of rest. And so we get out on the wrong side of the bed because we *have* to go to Mass Sunday mornings.

We think of Sunday Mass too much as an obligation and not enough as something else. And we do not think of Mass enough as something else for either one of two reasons: first, because we do not know what that something else is, or, secondly, because we have not much faith. Now, I think that Catholics who take their Sunday Mass rather hard, have faith. Otherwise they would not bother to think about Mass at all. On the other hand, I have a suspicion that they do not know too much of what the Mass is, and in particular, of the part which lay folk play in it.

Perhaps we can dispel some of this ignorance by saying a few words about the Missal, Baptism and St. John Chrysostom. The Missal will help establish the fact that people really have a part in the Sacrifice; Baptism will explain the reason for the fact; St. John Chrysostom will give us good advice on how to play our part in the Sacred Drama well.

*Lex orandi est lex credendi*—says an old adage. The law of prayer is the law of faith. The prayers of the Church give us a good idea of what she believes and teaches, especially if the prayers are used by the entire Church, or by a large section of the Church, over a long period of time. Let us apply this principle to the prayers of the Missal. I need scarcely tell you that the Missal is the large prayer-book from which the priest reads at Mass. It is also printed in a smaller form, either in Latin or in English, for the use of the laity. Since the eleventh century the Western Church has used the Roman Missal at Mass, and more or less in its present form. The prayers of course are hundreds of years older. What connection do these age-old prayers establish between the Sacrifice and the body of the Faithful?

#### THE MASS A CORPORATE ACT

We shall cite two passages from the most sacred part of the Mass.

Immediately after the Sanctus bell has rung, the priest begins to read the Canon of the Mass in preparation for the Consecration. The first prayer of the Canon begs God to receive and bless the Sacrifice which we offer for the Church, together with the Pope, the Bishop and all true worshipers belonging to the Catholic Faith. When this prayer to the Father has been said, the priest pauses with hands joined and head bowed, to pray for the living.

Be mindful, Lord, of thy servants . . . and of all those present . . . for whom we offer or *who themselves offer* to Thee this sacrifice of praise.

The Mass proceeds towards the Consecration. Anointed hands, soon to lift high the Body of Christ, are extended over the chalice. The bell rings once.

This offering of thy servant, and of thy whole family, we beg Thee to receive, Thine anger allayed.

From the wording of these prayers it is clear that the priest does not consider himself alone at the altar. His is not the sacrifice of a solitary worshiper. If we have read the prayers aright, all the Faithful, not only the men but also the women (*omnium circumstantium*), "all those present"—join with him to form one body which offers to God the

glorious Victim of our Sacrifice. There is concerted action at the Mass. God who teaches the individual to pray has not forgotten that we are also social beings, bound together by ties of family, country, race, and more especially, by our common dependence on Him. For the religious expression of this social life He has reserved the highest form of worship, sacrifice. And each member of God's family, from the "Father" who stands at the altar to the youngest child, has a part in this worship. No one is overlooked. "This offering of *Thy whole family* we beg Thee to receive." The Mass is not only offered for all but by all. "Be mindful . . . of all those present for whom we offer or *who themselves offer* the sacrifice of praise."

So when we go to church on Sunday we do not merely hear Mass; we *assist* at the offering. We take a lively share in the greatest act of adoration which men can give God. Surely, this is not merely a duty; it is a privilege; a privileged duty, like an angel's morning song of praise.

At this point one might put an objection. If our eyes do not deceive us, all the activity at Mass seems to center on one side of the altar rail. Only a priest has the power to consecrate; and the Consecration, being the very core and center of the Mass, constitutes its real offering. How can a layman be said to have part in it?

It is true that only a priest can cause the presence of Our Lord under the form of bread and wine. And this he does by consecration. But by the act of consecration the priest does *two* things: he brings Our Lord to the altar, and he offers Him to God. In the first he is the instrument of Jesus Christ, the High Priest of every Mass. In the second he is the representative of the Church, a chosen member of the Mystical Body of Christ, which offers the Victim of the Sacrifice through him and with him. We know this from the teaching of the Church as expressed in the prayers of the Missal.

However, the Church does not teach this beautiful doctrine *because* of these prayers. Rather are they the outward expression of what would be true even if the prayers had never existed. Our relations with Jesus Christ, who saved us by His bloody death, are of such a nature as to *demand* a corporate form of worship, such as we find in the Mass.

## THE EFFECT OF BAPTISM

This relationship is founded on the Sacrament of Baptism. Let us examine, therefore, that aspect of the Sacrament which has to do with our share in the priestly office of sacrifice.

Baptism is at once a death and a resurrection. It is a death to sin, because the waters of Baptism cleanse the soul of all sin, and a resurrection to the new life of sanctifying grace. The ancient way of administering the Sacrament beautifully symbolizes this double effect. The candidate was plunged into the waters which covered him and buried him to sin. And on rising from their depths he was revived; he began a new life.

Christ won this life for us by His cross. Hence with every right does St. Paul say that we are baptized into the death of Christ Jesus, that is, into the dying Christ. And the reason for this common death the Apostle immediately adds: "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. vi, 5).

By these words St. Paul wishes us to understand that beginning with Christ's death and with our baptism, two events so far separated in time but so closely woven together in purpose, He and we have all things in common. We die and rise from death with Him, we share His new life, His glory and His heritage.

The same Apostle, in another place, suggests a comparison of our union with Christ to the grafting of trees, where in the lives of trunk and branch are so commingled that the life of the branch is absorbed into the life of the trunk. Even so are we, by the Sacrament of Baptism, grafted unto Christ—that we may live His life.

The Church then, being formed of those who are baptized into Christ, may well be called the *Body*, of which each individual soul is a distinct member, and whose *Head* is Christ. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ.

So when we talk of a priest offering the Sacrifice of the Mass, we must keep in mind that he is, as it were, a branch which is fruitful only because of its connection with the root-stock, Christ. He is a member of that Body whose Head is Christ. Otherwise there is no explaining the Mass at all. For the Mass is Christ's Sacrifice. We can give

His Sacrifice to God only in so far as we are incorporated with Him. And just as each part of the tree, root, branch and leaf, has its own particular share in the production of the fruit; just as the whole man participates in the work of the hand; so, too, do the other members of Christ's Body have their part in the work of the priestly member who stands at the altar.

Hence we can say in all truth, that no sacrifice is really given to God except it be given by the Body of Christ, the Church. There is no such thing as a private sacrifice belonging exclusively to the priest. The act is public, be it celebrated in St. Peter's at Rome or in some African jungle. It is public because it is offered by the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, whose legitimate minister the priest is.

Because of this common and general offering, the priest with people and people with priest, the whole Church is sacerdotal (I Peter ii, 9). Since we have been baptized into Christ we have our own proportionate share in that sacerdotal power by which Christ offered Himself as a victim to God. And all the Faithful, joined to Christ in the Church, associate themselves with Him in giving to God the one Victim of Salvation aside from which there is no source of propitiation for sin.

No wonder then that the priest, after he has prepared the bread and wine for the solemn moment which is soon to come, turns to the people and says: "Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and *yours* may be acceptable to God, the Father Almighty." He knows that when the moment of sacrifice arrives he will not stand alone before God. He knows that when he holds the precious Victim in his hands, they will be strengthened by the bonds which bind him close to those beyond the altar rail who sacrifice with him. He knows that by virtue of the waters of Baptism his congregation is priestly, because—as St. Jerome says—Baptism is lay-priesthood.

#### HOW ASSIST AT MASS?

We are not surprised, therefore, in the light of what we now know of the Mass, to see an ardent soul like St. John Chrysostom arousing his people to a sense of their part in the Mass. In his day the activity beyond the altar rail was more pronounced externally than it is now. When the unconsecrated host was to be put upon the altar and the

wine into the chalice, it was the people who came forward and took from their baskets the life-giving elements which were soon to be changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. They answered "Amen" to the prayers of the priest; by which word they assented to the prayer and to all that was done by the priest. The holy Bishop exhorts them to mean in their hearts what they say with their lips.

Speaking of the dialogue which ensues between the priest and the people just before the Preface of the Mass—"Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God." "Indeed it is worthy and just"—St. Chrysostom says:

The prayer by which thanks are rendered to God is common to both priests and people; for the priest alone does not give thanks, but the whole congregation. . . . And I say this that each and every one, even the lowest, pay strict attention; and that we understand that all of us are one Body, differing the one from the other only as one member of a body differs from the other. And I tell you this *lest we leave everything to the priests* (In II Cor., Hom. 18, no. 3).

The passing centuries have brought changes in the ceremonies of the Mass, and the people bring the bread and wine no longer. But the Mass itself is just the same. It is the Sacrifice of the Supper Room and Calvary, and the congregation still, as of old, has a share in the offering of it.

If those old and saintly Fathers of the Church, who preached so fervently the art of assisting at Mass, St. Chrysostom, St. Ireneus, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, if they were to mount the modern pulpit would the burden of their words be different? I think not. Chrysostom could still tell his congregation to pay strict attention. He would not be asking for the attention which is required to appreciate a good play, but for that attention which is given by one who is about to take part in the play, realizing the while, that it is not a play of fiction but a drama of worship to God. He would not ask them to say their part aloud as in former days, but in their hearts, meaning them to be a link which joins each to the Sacrifice. Most of all he would exhort them, I think, to *assent* to everything which the priest does in their name at the altar. Chrysostom's listeners would certainly join their wills to the will of the priest by fervent acts of offering, asking God to accept the Sacrifice in reparation for their sins and the sins of the world.

What would be the best way, practically, to assist at Mass? I can think of no better method by which the mind

and heart of a layman can be joined to the offering of the Mass than by the use of the Missal. Here are written the prayers which accompany the Sacrifice. They are sacrificial prayers. They are certainly the most appropriate prayers because the Church puts them into the mouth of the priest and joins them to his every act at the altar. They keep in the mind the fact that Mass is a sacrifice—and not a prayer-meeting. They are the expression of that inward offering of the soul which sacrifice has ever symbolized, and which the Sacrifice of the Mass is in very fact. A man who reads his Missal at Mass will not think the time lost. It is for him an hour of sacrifice wherein he is a participant. And sacrifice is the soul of worship.

## The Mexican Scene

REV. JOSEPH F. THORNING, S.J.

*The second of two radio addresses given over the Paulist radio station, WLWL, during September, 1930. The first was reproduced in the CATHOLIC MIND, October 22, 1930.*

SEVERAL widely varied forces are helping to shape Mexico's life today. I shall speak of three of these tonight: mining, emigration, education.

The mining industries have bulked large in Mexican history. It was the thirst for gold which drove many Spanish conquistadores from outpost to outpost in the New World. Led on as they were by tales of fabulous wealth in cities whose streets were paved with the precious metal, they were forever seeking fortune "in the region just beyond the mountains." The gold never materialized in the quantities dreamed of, but silver by its abundance and quality did much to offset the disappointment. The wealth of San Luis Potosi was matched by the mines of Guanajuato, while both were outshone by the silver stream which gushed from the veins of Zacatecas. Finally, every State in Mexico, with the exception of Campeche, Yucatan and Tabasco, was pouring forth a steadily increasing tide of the white metal to rehabilitate the coinage of Europe and give a brilliant hue to the Golden Age of Spain. These vast remittances,

according to W. A. Shaw in his "History of Currency," were the salvation and monetary resurrection of the Old World. And in spite of the immense treasures transported overseas or employed at home in the adornment of cathedral, shrine and church, Baron von Humboldt could say as late as 1801 that Mexico was "the treasure house of the world." There are few countries where the supply of mineral wealth is so various and so inexhaustible.

In Mexico today there are over 2,000 mines, covering 633,213 acres and employing 500,000 men. The annual output of gold is \$35,000,000, of silver \$60,000,000, and copper \$40,000,000. Ordinarily 5,000 new claims are registered each year, giving some color to the assertion that only three-fourths of the mineral possibilities of Mexico have been exploited.

In fact the only metal which may be said to have been exploited south of the Rio Grande is silver. During three centuries of Spanish rule hundreds of millions of pesos were extracted and exported. For years this Crown colony furnished more than half the world's supply of silver.

Between the years 1548 to 1832 the 100 shafts sunk at Zacatecas yielded nearly 670,000,000 pesos. Their output is now 6,000,000 yearly. A single mine the Real del Monte produced 15,000,000 before 1850. The Trinidad in the same field yielded 40,000,000 in sixteen years, while the Valenciana mine in Guanajuato netted its owned 800,000,000 pesos. It is said on good authority that some of the old buildings in Chihuahua contain enough silver in their walls to render their demolition and destruction commercially profitable. In the nearby State of Sonora was found the largest silver nugget in existence weighing 2,750 pounds. No wonder pirates haunted the Spanish Main, lying in wait for the treasure ships that carried the bullion to the depleted markets of the Old World.

After the needs of Europe had been supplied the Orient became the market for Mexican silver. A veritable pipeline stretched from her mines to India, which textbooks in economics used to refer to as a silver sink draining millions of pounds of the white metal into its capacious maw, never to give them back. China's partiality for the Mexican peso became almost superstitious. It became the favorite circulating medium along the maritime provinces of Cathay. Between the time it was issued in 1868 and the downfall of



the Diaz Government in 1910, uncounted thousands of these pure silver dollars found their way across the Pacific Ocean. It was the only metallic currency in which the astute Chinese merchant had implicit confidence. Japan likewise used enormous quantities of silver. Consequently Mexico's prosperity was irrevocably linked with the Orient, with China, Japan and India where the gold standard was unknown and where the silver bullion and the silver peso were eagerly sought after in exchange.

Imagine, therefore, the disaster which followed when silver lost its vogue, not only in the East, but in the entire world. Nation followed nation in adopting and adhering to the gold standard. This movement sent the demand for silver tumbling headlong. India for the first time in its history went on a gold basis, while political unrest notably contracted the circulation of coin of any kind. Revolution broke out in China and diminished the value of that country as a market for silver. Japan was the last great nation to abandon silver, and that made Mexico's mining woes complete. Silver became almost a drug on the market, while the value of the Mexican peso was and is greatly depreciated. There is a spread of ten per cent between the silver in the peso and the gold in the *Oro Nacional*. Although the export of gold from Mexico is forbidden, the Secretary of the Treasury recently bemoaned the fact that smuggling is helping still further to undermine the national currency. Almost the only question you are asked in returning from Mexico to the United States is "Have you any gold pieces?" Paper money, of course, is not accepted south of the Rio Grande and the majority of transactions are in silver.

Silver, therefore, is something of a barometer of Mexico's prosperity. How fluctuating this has been may be gathered from the fact that the world price of silver has been as high as \$1.19 and as low as 31 cents per ounce. Today the price is fluttering around 39 cents per ounce. That is a reliable index to Mexico's economic status today. Even this 39 cents is not stable. The prices tend to vary from day to day, with a decided tendency to sag rather than to skyrocket. Ten American dollars bring twenty-four Mexican pesos and a fraction in exchange, while the difference measured in terms of purchasing power is even greater. The havoc this works, not only on the whole

financial structure of the nation, but also on the small shopkeeper and tradesman, is incalculable. "As silver goes, so goes the nation," and whereas the business man in New York or Chicago watches the gyrations of General Motors, International Harvester or Consolidated Copper, the Mexican banker or broker in reading the morning newspaper, casts his first hurried glance at the price of silver. It is the symbol of the nation's business.

#### EMIGRATION

The decline in silver brought about a gradual shut-down in the mining industry. This led to unemployment and accelerated the emigration of Mexicans to the United States. They had begun to come already, due to the complete economic organization brought on by revolutions. Insecurity, fear for life and property led thousands to leave the Republic. The beet fields of Colorado, the steel mills of South Chicago, the harvest lands of Texas and California absorbed much of this immigration. Since this work is largely seasonal it did not provide employment the year round and recently there has been considerable agitation against the Mexican being allowed free entry into the United States. The Mexican Government regrets the loss of these laborers as much as any one, and has been led to analyze its causes.

In studying the years from 1911 to 1928 it was found that the Madero revolution caused the emigration curve to rise to a maximum in 1912. Then it subsided for a while. It rose sharply with the internal revolutionary movement headed by Carranza and was again reduced in 1917. The clash between Carranza and Obregon produced another exodus, as did the De la Huerta revolution in 1922. Finally the religious persecution under Calles doubled the annual loss, the figures rising from 50,000 to 100,000 per year. The incidence of emigration and revolution is clear.

Mexico can ill afford this loss. According to the calculation of Manuel Gamio, Mexico loses periodically the energies and cooperation of nine per cent of its economically productive elements. The emigration of a mass of workers totaling at least 927,167 in eighteen years is abnormal and unfavorable to the country's development, even if during the same period an equal number returned to Mexico (sc. 927,167 left, 1,085,222 returned). With an

approximate density of population of seven inhabitants to the square kilometer, the natural resources of the land remain unexploited, largely for lack of workers. On the other hand it should not be forgotten that in the last nine years Mexicans in the United States remitted 10,000,000 pesos annually to relatives and friends south of the border. But this does not offset the loss of a million workers.

Analyzing the figures further it is discovered that 56.2 per cent of the immigration is from Guanajuato, Michoacan and Jalisco. The majority in these states is Indian and mestizo, and consequently these elements predominate in the group that entered the United States. Religious and economic motives impelled the relatively greater movement from these three Mexican provinces.

Curiously enough three States in this country largely absorbed the Mexican immigration. They are: California, Texas, and Illinois, accounting for 63.87 per cent of the total in the January months and 60.34 per cent in the July months, leaving only 36.13 and 39.66 per cent respectively for the other States. The figures are based on the movement of money orders from the United States to Mexico.

This, of course, represents the situation of those who could escape from their unfavorable economic environment. What of those who could not leave home, those who lacked either the railroad fare or the ambition to try a change of climate and occupation? A considerable number remained to beg. Mendicancy, in one of the richest lands of the world, has become a social institution. The institution of begging dates from 1810 when revolution began its ruinous career. As a result the large army of the unemployed, augmented by the halt, the lame and the blind, waits at church door and in public squares with outstretched hands and piteous pleas for largess in the shape of centavos or pesos. Women with children in arms are the most effective in eliciting alms from the passers-by. Some of the distress is genuine, being due to the closing of hospitals, asylums, orphanages, etc. by the revolutionary leaders. The whole system of public welfare, torn violently from the merciful hands of the Church, was thrust upon the streets and highways. What had been the loving task of consecrated men and women was left to the adventitious charity of the general public. Pious foundations, endowments and revenues were appropriated to provide pleasures for the reigning fav-

orite of some general, or to erect a villa for some new-fledged statesman. Relief became a public charge, the business of all and the duty of none. Charity became capricious, sporadic, blind. Hence it is that in Mexico City alone more than 10,000 live by begging and in the whole Republic mendicancy threatens to achieve the status of a recognized profession.

Where public charity is still operative, it is stripped of all spiritual value and significance. I will give only one example: the Cabañas Orphanage in Guadalajara. This is an immense network of buildings, covering forty acres and caring for over 1,000 orphan children. This institution owes its origin to Bishop Cabañas, whose name it still bears. He is revered as one of the most saintly, generous prelates who ever governed the diocese of Guadalajara. His heart was touched by the plight of the little ones left helpless without father or mother. After contributing his entire private fortune, he spent the remaining years of his life gathering money for his orphanage. The edifice stands a monument to his foresight and Catholic charity. The rooms are bright, large and airy. The walls, after seventy-five years, are as solid as the day they were erected. Playgrounds and fountains abound. Twenty-seven distinct gardens, patios or courts lend grace and variety to the interior passageways. An exquisite chapel crowns the work. It is a model orphanage.

But today the vast institution functions like a body without a soul, like a huge automaton without a heart or warm, red blood. For the chapel is barred up and closed. The Sacramental King of Bishop Cabañas descends no longer upon the altar. Neither priest nor bishop may officiate within this orphanage, built by bishops and priests. The chapel serves as a storehouse for old beds and cast-off furniture. Nowhere do you see the flowing robes, the gentle faces, the winning smiles of white-capped nuns who formerly took the place of mothers for the orphans. No hymns to Our Lord and Our Lady make glad the youthful heart. Instead the children are taught the latest jazz tunes. The day we were there, they were rehearsing "I love you, I hate you. I could kill you kissing you." The only religious note in the whole institution is a little hymn to Padre Cabañas which is sung on the feast of the holy founder of the orphanage. What a travesty on the vision of Bishop

Cabañas! And the same must be reported about every State-controlled hospital, asylum and institution in the Republic. God is excluded from His own tabernacles. This bears out the contention of many Mexicans that the first to suffer by the reign of confiscation, destruction and expropriation were the Mexicans themselves. Destroy the religious motive and charity is an empty shell. No wonder the poor, the sick and the orphaned look sad and woe-begone!

### EDUCATION

Education is another field where the Government's refusal to allow the Church and parents their rights has created great havoc. For the past seventy-five years religious education has been prohibited by law. As a result it is declared that one-half the children of Mexico are without school facilities. Here is the recently published statement of the Mexican Secretary of Education:

The statistical study which we are just finishing proves that the Republic is confronted with an appalling problem of illiteracy. . . . We have 1,593,301 pupils in the primary schools of the Republic. From these figures it is clear that a little more than half the children of school age are enrolled in the schools and that another million and a half are receiving no education or instruction at all.

According to a dispatch from the N. C. W. C. in Washington, recent correspondence from Mexico indicates that the Government is giving serious consideration to various petitions from Catholic bodies in Mexican States, and that the result will probably be a ruling whereby the supervision of the Federal Government over primary schools will be limited to the curriculum and methods employed in secular subjects and that when the said requirements in this regard are complied with, there will be no objection to religious instruction whenever the parents request this.

The Church once had a flourishing school system in Mexico, not only for the Spaniards, mestizos, and creoles but also for the native Indian population. In one afternoon in Puebla, one of the foremost cities in the Republic, I saw five colleges which formerly were conducted by a prominent Religious Order of men. One by one the colleges were confiscated, and today they are either abandoned or used for Government purposes. When you see the oldest

Indian school on the main plaza of Puebla now serving as a combination barracks and stable you can understand why the Indians have not received a full measure of education. And when you observe that the garage next door was formerly a church you wonder what civilizing influence can come from such a transformation.

Education is the keynote of Catholic Action, that Catholic Action which is the watchword of the hour in Mexico today. The trials of the religious persecution displayed the magnificent qualities of lay leadership available for the cause of Christ. Consequently the Mexican Catholic, whether he be a professional man or a simple laborer, is schooling himself thoroughly in Catholic principles and then carrying them into effect in workshop or office. Lay leaders, men and women, are being trained. In one center of Catholic Action in the capital I saw three groups take turns in this work. The first (morning session) consisted of young women who were learning philosophy; the second (afternoon session) was made up of business and professional men, and the third (in the evening) was formed of day laborers. This will give some idea of how strenuously and enthusiastically Mexicans are striving to fit themselves for the lay apostolate. They are making a brave fight for fundamental human liberties. They deserve the support and encouragement of the civilized world.

## The Church and the Farm

REV. W. HOWARD BISHOP

*Presidential address at the eighth annual meeting of the Catholic Rural Life Conference, held at Springfield, Ill., August 25-26, 1930. Reprinted from the Catholic Daily Tribune.*

**T**HERE has been from the beginning of man's life on earth a very close relationship between religion and agriculture. It could not have been otherwise. Agriculture was the dominant temporal occupation of man, as religion was the chief concern of his soul. Hence it is that the Bible, the God-inspired textbook of religion, is written in an agricultural setting.

The very first mention in Genesis of an act of Divine worship tells of two sons of our first parents offering sacrifice to God from the flock and from the field, for "Abel was a shepherd and Cain a husbandman." We are not prepared to say what comfort the live-stock farmers of our time may take from the fact that God smiled on the sacrifice of Abel but not on that of Cain. But we do know that this lovely harmony between the things of the soul and the things of the soil, between the quest of bread and meat and the quest of God, endures through both Testaments of Holy Writ. The most touching associations are in the life of the Saviour Himself, who chose a stable to be born in and shepherds, invited by an angel choir, for His first visitors; who spent His days preaching by wheat field and pasture; who put Himself in the place of the Paschal Lamb of old and chose the fruits of field and vineyard to change to His Flesh and Blood. He is the Food of our souls, and those who give Him to mankind are husbandmen and shepherds of the spirit.

The modern Church continues today, as it has done in every age, to pay its tribute to agriculture in the title of Pastor—one who feeds a flock—in the bishop's crozier—a conventionalized shepherd's staff—and in the bread and wine that are used as the matter of the Blessed Sacrament. Thus Divine Providence, throughout the whole course of Revelation and throughout the history of the Church which brings His message to every age, has chosen to associate His heavenly mysteries with herds and harvests, so necessary to the life of man. Is it in order to show how indispensable He is to man's eternal soul?

#### CONCERN FOR THE FARMER

The attention of the world has been drawn to agriculture in recent weeks because of the present drought that seems to be assuming the proportions of a national calamity. No person of sense questions the dependence of the world upon agriculture. But it is one thing to know a fact, quite another thing to realize it. Men everywhere are being forced to realize and will doubtless have occasion to realize still more vividly next winter—that great calamities which directly affect the fortunes of so large and important an element of our population as the farming class must inevit-

ably inflict harsh penalties upon the country at large. The present tragical situation only emphasizes and renders more spectacular the working out of this general principle. Leaders of thought have long since come to the conclusion that the great economic depression that has been growing steadily worse for the farmer during the last decade is a thing of national and not merely of sectional concern. And leaders of the Church have also been coming to realize that our hard-pressed rural people are also suffering under great religious handicaps, that these handicaps are productive of a vast annual leakage from the Faith, that they stand in the way of progress in the winning of new souls, that they are reflected in every city and town in the nation in the form of fallen-aways whose faith was lost before they left the country.

In both of these situations the Church is deeply interested. It goes without saying that she is chiefly interested in the religious difficulties of our rural people, but she does not close her eyes to their temporal hardships. Having the farmer's confidence and respect in communities where she is well established, she can give invaluable aid in carrying the message of agriculture departments and State extension services to him. The parish school and assembly hall give splendid opportunities for instruction in agriculture, boys' and girls' club work, community contests and exhibits, etc. The Church is the friend and ally of science today as she has been in the past, and our agricultural experts, laboring to get their message to the hard-pressed farm population, will find no stronger or more willing ally than the rural priest and the rural parish-school teacher, once they realize their opportunity.

#### THE FARMER'S SOUL

But the Church is chiefly interested in the farmer's soul. She wants her thousands of loyal, devoted rural people to have better facilities for the knowledge and practice of their Faith. She wants their children to have schools or vacation courses or correspondence courses of religion. She wants through these improved facilities to get her message into the homes of the lukewarm and fallen-aways. She wants to retrieve, if possible, some of that vast number of apostates and their children whom we refer to as the "leak-



age" from the Faith, and, yes, she wants to bring her beautiful teaching to the uninformed and misinformed outsider who, if he knew her better, would respect and love her more. For the chief object of the Church in the country as everywhere else, is to save souls. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world—" city man or country man—is as true today as it was nineteen centuries ago. It is as true today as it was when God made man from the slime of the earth, but breathed into his face a soul as immortal as Himself. It is the battle cry that warms the hearts of rural missionaries today as it fired the hearts of the Apostles who walked with Christ. It is the thought that gives power to their arms and romance to their lives as they aid old and young, black and white, learned and illiterate, native and foreign-born, on the noblest enterprise toward the grandest of all human achievements.

#### BETTER CATHOLICS

The aims of the Church in the country, then, are both temporal and spiritual. She wants to be helpful to our country people both in this world and the next. She wants our farmers to be better Catholics for their souls' sake, and our Catholics to be better farmers for their temporal good and ultimately for their spiritual good. She wants to prevent our farmers from losing the Faith through the hardship of attending to it and to prevent our Catholics from giving up their farms because of similar hardships, when they are fitted to continue on them. She realizes that for the sake of Catholicity everywhere, in city, town and country, a strong rural Catholic population must be maintained.

But it must not be understood that it is the purpose of this conference to give its attention exclusively to Agriculture as the occupation of our country people. Although it is the dominant occupation, it is not the only one. The situation of Catholic people in small mining towns in Illinois, Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania is also a subject for us to be concerned about. The much-talked-of passing of the country doctor and the question: Who is to take his place? and the hard-pressed situation of our country store-keepers, harassed by chain-store competition, are just as legitimate a field for study and action, though not so important from the point of view of extension, as the agricultural field.

## THE PROGRAM

And what are the methods we are employing to bring about these ends? Behold our program!

Roughly, the activities of the Conference may be grouped under three headings: We are trying to hold those who are already Catholics and check the great leakage from the Church in the country. The vacation school of religion, inexpensive, efficient and universally adaptable, is our own product, trade-marked but not patented, the invention of our own founder and Bishop-elect. We recommend it to all the schoolless parishes of America, and in increasing numbers they are accepting it. Perhaps a thousand have been held this summer. It is not as efficient as the parish school, but far better than the makeshift we call Sunday schools, and it will do more than anything else to prepare the people for the greater sacrifices that parish schools require, in parishes where they are at all feasible. The correspondence courses in religion for groups so scattered that even vacation schools are impossible are also being pushed by our Conference as one of our own products from the same master mind. Adult education, education for parenthood, the lay liturgical movement, and rural high schools are other expedients that are being encouraged to enrich the life and strengthen the faith of rural Catholics and check the leakage from the Fold.

Secondly, we are trying to strengthen the foothold the Church has gained in the rural sections where it has been established. Insured permanence is the word, and not this constant dwindling away of our smaller rural parishes that makes us wonder if a future generation will find any Catholics at all in them. We cannot have insured permanence if rural Catholics in increasing numbers, and regardless of their adaptability for farming, continue to abandon the farm and move to overcrowded cities. We cannot have insured permanence when the rural parish fails to hold at least a fair share of the energetic and imaginative type of young people who are fitted for leadership. We must fasten these parishes to the soil with rivets that centuries will not wear loose. Increase their members and give them leaders worthy of the name. To do this we are gearing in with certain well-tried movements that have been set on foot and profitable to the rising generation, to render them bet-

ter fitted to thrive in a rural environment and to develop those equipped for it, in the elements of leadership. Boys' and girls' clubs, sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture, are accomplishing wonders along these lines. All of our rural parish schools should have them, and pastors that have no schools will do a great favor to their children and their parishes by encouraging them to enter wholeheartedly into this movement. Parish credit unions, of which we have just heard, promise to do much when adapted to rural needs. The extension service of the State universities and every form of cooperative endeavor that helps to put the farmer on an even footing with his city brother will also tend to dispose our Catholic young people, who are fitted for farm life, to remain in the country to share its broadened opportunities and help make the rural Catholic parish a permanent, going concern.

#### MORE CONVERTS

Third and last, we want to win more converts to the Church. I doubt if the present number of converts per year in America compensates for the annual leakage from the Church. And in the country, where the leakage is probably greatest, conversions are certainly fewest. And in the country places where the Church is little known, ignorance and hostility toward the Church go unchecked. A better-informed Catholic body will help to counteract the harm this hostility is doing even to our rural Catholics, in whom it produces a decided inferiority complex where the Church's position is not well backed up by a live parish organization.

But merely to keep our own people spiritually armed in self-defense against this false understanding seems hardly to be the full duty of the Church. There is a growing sentiment among Catholic leaders everywhere that ample opportunity should be afforded our non-Catholic brethren to become acquainted with Catholic belief and practice, that ignorance may be enlightened and hostility disarmed and a sentiment at least tolerant and fair developed through Catholic Action among vast numbers who are now our enemies in the best of faith. It is urged that Catholic Action should go even beyond this point and frankly propose to itself the objective of greater annual

harvests of converts to the Church. The Catholic Rural Life Conference, realizing the infinitely greater need of such activity in rural places than in cities, because of the influence these sections exert as the nurseries of the nation's native increase and, to a vast extent, the moulders of the nation's thought, has thrown itself into this movement for non-Catholic enlightenment to bring its blessings by whatever means it may to the rural communities of America.

#### FIRST OFFICIAL STEP

This morning's session decided upon the establishment of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine as the Conference's first official step in a permanent effort toward enlightenment to be pursued in our rural parishes. Let us hope—and pray—that it will mark the beginning of an aggressive campaign among our rural brethren, a campaign in which the weapons used are neither apology nor controversy nor abuse, but simple truth with charity. If ignorance about the Church has bred hatred among so many of our separated brethren, let us see if kindly enlightenment will not breed love.